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June 13, 2002

To: Selected District Superintendents
Selected CBEDS Coordinators
Dropout Prevention Coordinators

From: Susan Lange, Deputy Superintendent
Finance, Technology and Administration Branch

Subject: Possible Modification of Definition of Dropouts for
California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS)

Dropout data are used as part of the selection criteria for the United States Department of Education's (USDE) School Dropout Prevention program. In the past, USDE permitted California school districts to report dropout data as defined in the CBEDS Administrative Manual when applying for the USDE School Dropout Prevention program competitive funding.

For 2002, the USDE eligibility criteria for School Dropout Prevention program competitive funding required that applicants use the definition of dropouts from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) when reporting dropout data. The impact of this decision for 2002 is that school districts in California and several other states were not eligible to receive USDE School Dropout Prevention program competitive funds.

The California Department of Education (CDE) was not made aware of this change in policy until April 2002, well after the CBEDS 2001 dropout data were collected. Subsequently, CDE requested authorization to use an alternate dropout rate calculation formula to allow California districts to apply for the competitive funding in 2002, while we proceeded to change our definition for future years. The USDE did not grant the request.

In order to enable California school districts to become eligible for the School Dropout Prevention program competitive funds in the future, we are currently trying to determine how quickly California's definition of dropouts can be changed to conform to the NCES definition of a dropout. The most significant consideration is how soon school districts can change their data collection.

Two attachments are included with this letter. The first attachment, titled "Significant Differences Between NCES and CBEDS Dropout Definition" contains a summary of the significant differences between California's dropout definition and the NCES definition. Also

June 13, 2002

Page 2

included is an excerpt from the “Instructions for Completing the Nonfiscal Surveys of the Common Core of Data - School Universe Survey - Agency Universe Survey - State Nonfiscal Survey - 2001 – 2002,” which includes the NCES definition of a dropout.

We understand that it is important to have sufficient time for your district to make changes in data collection procedures. In consideration of this, I will contact you again by mid July to let you know the timeline for this transition. Please contact Karl Scheff at (916) 327-0192 if you have any questions.

SL:ks

Attachments

- [Differences in Dropout Definitions](#)
- [Appendix G: Dropout Reporting](#)

cc: Paula Mishima, Deputy Superintendent, CDE
Mary Weaver, Director, CDE
Karen Lowrey, Manager, CDE
Karl Scheff, Manager, CDE